

Meeting	Full Council
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Notes from the Swindon Parish & Town Clerks' Operational Meeting held on 15th July 2026

1. Country Parks Strategy

The draft Country Parks Strategy was discussed. A key part of the discussion was how parishes will be involved in the development of the strategy. Wider engagement is expected during October and November, and we have been asked to complete an engagement form.

Presentation slides have been shared with Councillors – they must not be shared onwards.

The strategy is considering issues including:

- tree equity and unequal access to trees and green space;
- biodiversity net gain;
- tree canopy coverage;
- air quality;
- the benefits of increased tree planting;
- access to nature and green spaces; and
- the relationship between the natural environment, health and wider life chances.

The approach is based on census areas/LSOAs rather than parish or ward boundaries, so areas of need do not necessarily correspond directly with existing parish boundaries.

2. Swindon Tree Equity

The Woodland Trust presentation highlighted that trees are increasingly regarded as essential urban infrastructure, providing benefits for health and wellbeing, air quality, cooling, water management, biodiversity, recreation and connections between urban and rural areas.

The Woodland Trust's Tree Equity Score is a map-based approach intended to identify where communities have unequal access to trees and green space.

The presentation identifies a significant tree-equity challenge in Swindon:

- Swindon's overall tree canopy cover is **8%**.
- Its composite Tree Equity Score is **81**.
- Comparable towns shown in the presentation have higher canopy cover: Basingstoke 15.8%, Bristol 18.6% and Oxford 16.6%.
- 32 LSOAs have a Tree Equity Score below 75.



- Bringing all LSOAs up to a score of 75 is estimated to require approximately 9,804 medium trees.
- 15 LSOAs have a score below 70, with approximately 2,747 medium trees identified as the requirement to bring these areas to a score of 70.

The important point is that the Tree Equity approach is intended to identify where additional tree cover could have the greatest impact, rather than simply seeking to plant trees evenly across the borough.

3. What the Tree Equity work means for Haydon Wick Parish Council

Haydon Wick is specifically identified in the Woodland Trust presentation as a high-priority/poor tree-equity parish, although the score varies significantly across the parish:

Haydon Wick – Tree Equity Score 88–68

This means that there are parts of Haydon Wick which perform relatively well, while other areas have considerably poorer tree equity. This is particularly relevant because the Tree Equity assessment works at a more detailed geographical level than the parish boundary. Consequently, Haydon Wick Parish Council should not assume that the whole parish has the same level of need.

The practical implication is that the Parish Council could help identify:

- areas where residents feel there is insufficient tree cover;
- streets or neighbourhoods where additional trees could realistically be planted;
- opportunities on parish-owned or other publicly accessible land;
- areas where trees could improve the appearance and character of the neighbourhood;
- opportunities to connect existing green spaces and habitats;
- locations where trees could provide shade and cooling;
- community groups or residents who may be interested in tree planting; and
- opportunities to incorporate additional tree cover into future development.

The Woodland Trust presentation also emphasises that tree planting is not simply about the number of trees planted. Establishment and ongoing maintenance are significant issues, with an indicative cost of around £700 per tree for some planting, although this can be supplemented by free Woodland Trust Community Tree Packs. Strong community involvement and identifying suitable land are also recognised as challenges.

4. Woodland Trust – Trees for All

The Trees for All project was noted as part of the wider discussion around tree planting, biodiversity and tree equity.

The presentation describes a proposed funded programme involving the Woodland Trust and partners, with an anticipated five-year programme and dedicated Woodland Trust capacity for community engagement, communications and parish council liaison.

The wider partnership includes:

- Swindon Borough Council;
- Great Western Community Forest;



- Woodland Trust;
- Western Forest;
- National Trust; and
- Wiltshire Wildlife Trust.

5. Swindon Nature Belt – important clarification

A Swindon Nature Belt was discussed as a potential concept. The proposed idea is to create a corridor for environmental action running from Stanton Park and Stratton Wood through Swindon towards Braydon Forest, connecting areas of existing and potential environmental activity.

The concept is intended to bring together community engagement, tree planting, biodiversity, access to nature and improvements to the urban environment.

However, this is currently only a concept. It is not an approved or adopted Nature Belt, and the presentation explicitly states that the map is subject to partner approval and is not an official map. This clarification is important for Full Council: the discussion should therefore be regarded as early engagement and an opportunity to influence a developing proposal, rather than notification of an agreed scheme.

6. Western Forest

The wider initiative sits within the work of the Western Forest, whose vision is to create thriving woodlands, farms and communities connected by trees. The proposed Swindon work would seek to connect existing environmental assets and identify opportunities for tree planting and nature recovery based on community priorities and tree-equity evidence. The intention is to use community workshops, walks and local events to understand what residents want and then develop a longer-term programme of projects.

7. Summary:

- The Tree Equity presentation gives Haydon Wick a clear reason to engage with this work.
- Haydon Wick is identified as having a wide range of Tree Equity scores, from 88 to 68, placing parts of the parish within the Woodland Trust's identified higher-priority areas.
- The Parish Council should therefore consider taking an evidence-led but locally informed approach:
 - a. Engage with the Woodland Trust and SBC as the Nature Belt and wider tree-equity work develops.
 - b. Ask for the detailed Tree Equity mapping for Haydon Wick so that councillors can understand which parts of the parish have the greatest identified need.
 - c. Identify potential planting locations on parish-owned land and other suitable public/community land.
 - d. Seek residents' views on where additional trees, shade, biodiversity and green-space improvements would be most beneficial.
 - e. Consider future developments as opportunities to secure appropriate tree planting and long-term maintenance.
 - f. Look at connections between existing green spaces, rather than treating individual tree planting schemes in isolation.
 - g. Consider community involvement, including local groups, schools and residents, recognising that successful planting requires long-term maintenance as well as initial funding.

To be involved the Council must participate in the forthcoming October/November parish engagement session on the Country Parks Strategy.



8. Clerks' Operational Updates

The following operational matters were also raised at the meeting:

Weed spraying

- Weed spraying maps are expected to be shared during July.
- Some interim work has already commenced.
- Gateway routes are routinely treated.
- Parish council routes are expected to follow.
- Any urgent priority areas should be sent to **Simon Anthony**.
- The new tender was expected to be appointed, with work anticipated to commence towards the end of July.

Central service map

- A central base map showing service provision across the borough is being developed.

Big Town Centre Clean Up

- A programme is being developed and parish councils will be invited to contribute once details are circulated.

Outstanding parish matters

- Simon Anthony is to provide a written response to other outstanding matters.

Ward Councillor Champions

- The introduction of Ward Councillor Champions for new and existing councillors was discussed following the May elections.

Communication with SBC

- Clerks were encouraged to contact service directors **Kirston and Helena** where issues or updates are not receiving a prompt response from Swindon Borough Council officers.